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What the Industry Reads First

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Get on With It: Turner CEO Eagerly Awaits AT&T-Time Warner Resolution

Almost 16 months since **AT&T** and **Time Warner** first agreed to their megamerger, **Turner** CEO *John Martin*'s patience with the regulatory process surrounding his parent company's future is waning. "At this point, I think everybody just wants a little bit of clarity and certainty," Martin said Wednesday during a keynote panel at **CES**. He added the deal "can't close fast enough" for Time Warner-owned Turner and admitted to being "disappointed" by **DOJ's** decision to file a lawsuit to block the vertical merger. Speaking with recently hired **Hulu** CEO *Randy Freer* and the *Financial Times'* *Matthew Garrahan*, Martin described the current video entertainment landscape as a "race to the center" between traditional content companies looking to find ways to reach and engage consumers directly and digital technology behemoths seeking to foster the ability to create their own premium content. He stressed that Turner will "need to ultimately control the end-to-end technology experience," something the merger with AT&T would certainly help enable. "What a lot of people don't understand—and frankly this is what I think the government is missing as it relates to looking at these mergers in a backward-looking way—is we're competing in the land of the giants," Martin said. "If you don't think **Facebook** and **Google** and **Amazon** are the land of the giants, think again." From vertical mergers like AT&T-Time Warner to horizontal combinations like **Disney-Fox**, the importance of scale to relevancy seems to be a driving factor behind the recent spike in M&A. "I would much rather be on the bigger side of scale right now than when you look at small cable network groups that I think are really going to struggle for relevance as we move ahead," Martin said. He added lots of "marginal content players" are going to disappear in the next 5-10 years. Freer said that since Hulu mainly operates independent of its corporate parents (Disney, Fox, **Comcast** and Time Warner), his staff has been able to ignore much of the noise about the impact of the pending Disney-Fox deal on Hulu. In addition to creating quality original content like "The Handmaid's Tale," Freer said the key for Hulu is user experience. Referencing one of Turner's flagship content initiatives, Freer said his company has to find ways to make the experience of watching **TBS'** *Samantha Bee* on Hulu better than watching it anywhere else. "In the world we live in today, you have to be great at the technology it takes to deliver your product. You can't fall down on that. Whether that's your distribution whether that's your transport, however you look at it, if you're not great at the technology that bridges the gap between you and manufacturing your consumer, you're never going to be successful in this world."

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TiVo Hits Comcast Again: The **TiVo** patent suits against **Comcast** keep coming. The MVPD is gearing up to appeal an **International Trade Commission** ruling from November that resulted in it removing the DVR scheduling featuring through its smartphone app. But now it's facing new lawsuits from TiVo (formerly **Rovi**), which claim the X1 recording systems infringes on patents for various functions, such as pausing shows and restarting live programming. "Comcast engineers independently created our X1 products and services, and through its litigation campaign against Comcast, Rovi seeks to charge Comcast and its customers for technology Rovi didn't create," Comcast said in response. "Rovi's attempts to extract these unfounded payments for its aging and increasingly obsolete patent portfolio have failed to date. And as we have in their other suits, we will continue to aggressively defend ourselves." TiVo plans to take these additional patent claims to the ITC and will seek an order preventing X1 boxes from continuing to be imported in the US. "Hundreds of media and entertainment leaders around the world recognize the value of our innovations by selecting our products and services and licensing our intellectual property. Our goal is for Comcast to renew its long-standing license so it can continue providing its customers the many popular features Rovi invented," said TiVo CEO *Enrique Rodriguez*.

FCC Pauses Sinclair-Tribune Review: The **FCC** Media Bureau hit the pause button Thursday on the agency's informal 180-day shot clock for reviewing **Sinclair's** proposed acquisition of **Tribune**. The move comes after Sinclair told Commission staff this month that it's evaluating divestitures as well as amendments to reflect recent changes with media ownership rules, noting that **DOJ** review may impact certain divestiture choices. In November, the FCC voted 3-2 to relax media ownership rules so that a broadcaster can own two of the top four stations in a city. The Bureau decided to stop the clock on Day 167 until the referenced amendments and divestiture applications have been filed and staff has had an opportunity to fully review them.

Broadband Beltway Moves: Members of the **House Communications** subcommittee introduced a series of resolutions to lay the groundwork for broadband infrastructure buildouts. The resolutions include measures to ensure that funding goes to areas currently unserved and that federal policy treats all broadband providers in a tech-neutral manner. Another would ensure wireless broadband infrastructure funding preference for states that support small cell siting reform. Subcommittee chair **Marsha Blackburn** (R-TN) pledged there would be more legislative action to come. -- The **FCC** will convene the Broadband Deployment Advisory Committee for its fourth meeting, Jan 23. In addition to continuing discussions about how to accelerate broadband deployment, the committee will consider reports and recommendations from its working groups, which include Model Code for Municipalities, Model Code for States, Competitive Access to Broadband Infrastructure, Removing State and Local Regulatory Barriers and Streamlining Federal Siting.

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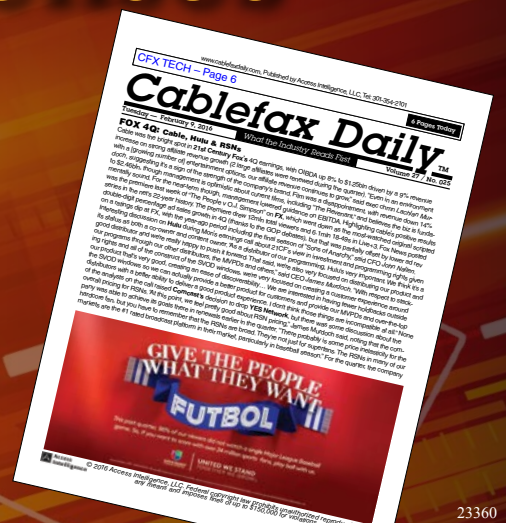
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Get WOW!ed: **Macquarie Research** believes there's a real buying opportunity for **WOW!** shares, notifying clients that non-fundamental reasons have pressured them down (-9% this week vs a flat S&P). In a research note, analyst *Amy Yong* predicted that a \$50mln buyback approved last month could relieve some of the pressure **WOW!** has experienced from 43% owner **Avista** distributing some of its shares to partners. She also believes the recent addition of CEO *Teresa Elder*, with her background in wireless and cable, should be beneficial.

Locast Launch: **NAB** doesn't seem too concerned about a streaming service providing local broadcast signals of 14 NYC stations for free. "Over the years, numerous services from **Aereo** to **FilmOn** have tried to find creative ways to skirt the communications and copyright laws that protect local broadcasters and our tens of millions of viewers. Without more details, this effort by the Sports Fan Coalition sounds like the latest such effort. We are deeply skeptical that this service will survive legal scrutiny where its predecessors have failed," **NAB** spokesman *Dennis Wharton* said. He's referring to **Locast.org**, which bills itself as a non-profit started by the **Sports Fan Coalition**. "Locast.org is a 'digital translator,' meaning that Locast.org operates just like a traditional broadcast translator service, except instead of using an over-the-air signal to boost a broadcaster's reach, we stream the signal over the Internet to consumers located within the New York City market," the site says. **Twitter** handle LocastOrg sent its first tweet Thursday, announcing that is "on the air," ahead of this weekend's **NFL** playoff games. **Public Knowledge** gave the mission it's support, arguing that there is a legal pathway for it. "As the Supreme Court made clear in the **Aereo** case, internet retransmissions of broadcast programming are subject to copyright law in the same way as other retransmissions, such as cable and satellite TV. Section 111 of the Copyright Act makes clear that nonprofits can retransmit broadcast programming to the public on a free, public service basis. Congress created this provision with the expectation that services like Locast would take advantage of it," PK senior counsel *John Bergmayer* said in a statement.

Carriage: **Frontier** is gearing up to launch **Ride TV** to its Vantage TV customers, after a deal was reached between the two in November. The horse-focused network will be made available as an optional \$5/month service effective Jan 21. **Verizon** offers the channel in a similar fashion. -- **fuboTV** and **Showtime** have come together to bring nine premium channels to its live streaming TV service as part of the Fubo Premier base package. Offered as a \$10.99/month add-on, subs will also be able to stream Showtime series' on all fuboTV platforms along with its library of movies and comedy specials. -- **Smithsonian Channel** has found two new homes on **Hulu with Live TV** and **YouTube TV**. Live linear and on-demand content will be available on both platforms along with TV Everywhere authentication. Hulu with Live TV subs can watch Smithsonian programming on two simultaneous streams across up to six profiles and boasts 50 hours of Cloud DVR recording storage. YouTube TV is currently only available on iOS, Android, Chromecast and Xbox.

5G Wars: **AT&T** made noise this month with its plans to launch mobile 5G to customers in 12 markets this year, but **Verizon** certainly is very much in the 5G game. At **CES** this week, CTO *Hans Vestberg* reiterated the company's previously announced plans to offer fixed 5G in 3-5 markets by the end of this year. "We're now focused on one slice, which is basically residential broadband with millimeter wave spectrum in order to get superior performance quickly to market. That's what we're launching this year," he said, explaining that residential 5G is just one "slice" of overall plans.

On the Street: **Barclays** initiated coverage of **Netflix**, projecting that in the next 3-5 years, it will be the second largest media company by revenue next to Disney (doesn't include studios and theme parks). The firm put an "overweight" rating on shares with a price target of \$245. As far as challenges, Barclays points to competition since Netflix is a market leader and the fact it's not a platform, limiting bundling opportunities.

Starz Still Off Altice: NY Democratic House members *Yvette Clarke* (D-NY) and *Hakeem Jeffries* have asked the heads of **Altice USA** and **Starz** to negotiate in good faith and come to a mutually agreeable solution. The letter, penned Thursday, doesn't take sides in the dispute. The two, note, that Starz programming is of particular importance to the African American community.

Turner at TCA: **Turner's truTV** announced its greenlights and premiere dates at the **TCA** press tour. Comedic anthology series "Bobcat Goldthwait's Misfits & Monsters" will premiere this summer, with guest stars *Seth Green*, *Bridget Everett* and *Danny Pudi* joining the celebrated director on the show's TCA panel. "Paid Off with Michael Torpey" will see students competing to have their college debt paid off, and scripted comedy "Tacoma FD" from *Kevin Heffernan* and *Steve Lemme* ("Super Troopers") has been ordered to pilot. -- **TBS** ordered two more seasons of "Full Frontal with Samantha Bee." The sole female-hosted late-night program comes back Feb 7. Unscripted comedies "Snoop Dogg Presents The Joker's Wild" and "Drop the Mic" have both been renewed for second seasons expected to air this spring. The laughs will continue with the premiere of "The Last O.G." on April 3 at 10:30pm, marking *Tracy Morgan's* return to television.

PROGRAMMER'S PAGE

Striking Goldthwait

Most people remember *Bobcat Goldthwait* as that madcap stand-up comic whose unhinged vocal gymnastics made every line sound like it was delivered in excruciating pain. His unique style was often hilarious, but in recent years Goldthwait's talent as a writer and director has mostly languished below the public radar. That may change if his new 8-episode anthology series "Misfits & Monsters" catches fire when it debuts this summer. Take one episode, whose premise involves a voice actor whose cartoon character comes to life and stalks him and his family. What begins as a dark comedy ends as... darker comedy and an exploration of one man's personal fears manifesting themselves into an animated boogeyman that may or may not be real. "It used to be that shows were trying to get a mass audience," Goldthwait told me in an interview at **TCA Thursday**. "Now it seems to be, 'Can you get me an audience,' so that's cool." Similar to **Netflix's** "Black Mirror" and those classic episodes of "The Twilight Zone," Goldthwait brings his strange ideas to the small screen with a reckless abandon that's daring and potentially dangerous. Episodes range from time travel to a mockumentary to a 1970s movie satire—all of them taking a comedic look at relatable fears, anxieties and politics (yes, there's a werewolf President). "They all tie up, but they all are different genres and styles, and even different periods," he said. Some of these stories have been bouncing around in Goldthwait's head for a long time, and he's actually been pitching them around for seven years—all while the anthology series concept started to catch on within the industry. In a way, the world caught up to him. "All of these styles and all of these things have been done, so it has to be my take on it," he said. While Goldthwait won't appear on camera, he's wrote and directed all the episodes. So it's truly his vision. If you haven't thought about Goldthwait in the past, *Misfits & Monsters* is a great way back in to a wonderfully twisted mind. — *Michael Grebb*

Reviews: "True Conviction With Anna-Sigga Nicolazzi," series premiere, 11pm, Tuesday, **Investigation Discovery**. It's not a surprise that ID knows how to tell crime stories. This series adds to its street cred. Narrator and series host *Anna-Sigga Nicolazzi* is a former prosecutor in the Brooklyn, NY, district attorney's office and holder of a 35-0 record in homicide trials. Nicolazzi is at home talking to fellow officers of the court. Highly telegenic, she's comfortable, too, with victims such as *Bob Decker*, whose wife Donna was murdered in a fascinating 1988 case re-told in the series' debut. Most critical, though, is the way "True" tells stories and the quality of cases presented. Based on early eps, it will be another ID hit. -- "Chain of Command," series premiere, 9pm, Monday, **Nat Geo**. For years, Nat Geo has crafted a relationship with the US military. The fruits of that endeavor can be seen in the opening ep of this often-riveting 8-part docu-series. There are so many unprecedented and intimate views of US and allied efforts to eradicate Islamic State (IS) from Iraq that it's hard to pick the most compelling: the command center in Mosul that's akin to a basement where soldiers are playing video games; a ride in an F-22 over Qatar; or Mosul civilians fleeing their homes amid IS sniper fire. It's chilling. — *Seth Arenstein*

Basic Cable P2+ Prime Rankings*

(01/01/18-01/07/18)

Mon-Sun	MC	MC
	US	US AA
	AA%	(000)
ESPN	1.246	3795
FOXNC	0.646	1966
MSNBC	0.509	1551
HGTV	0.484	1475
DISC	0.457	1391
USA	0.445	1354
ID	0.394	1201
HIST	0.383	1167
TNT	0.363	1104
A&E	0.344	1048
TBSC	0.343	1043
TLC	0.323	984
ADSM	0.307	935
NICK	0.300	914
FOOD	0.297	903
HALL	0.286	872
FX	0.286	869
DSNY	0.271	826
CNN	0.269	819
FRFM	0.260	791
BRAVO	0.256	780
LIFE	0.220	670
TVL	0.219	666
NAN	0.211	644
DSJR	0.197	601
HMM	0.191	582
INSP	0.191	581
NKJR	0.189	574
AMC	0.188	574
APL	0.187	570
CRN	0.187	569
NATGEO	0.178	542
VH1	0.174	531
MTV	0.166	506
NGW	0.160	488
LMN	0.159	484
SYFY	0.151	460
TRAVEL	0.148	449
ESPN2	0.147	448
HBO	0.143	435
PARA	0.140	425

*P2+ L+SD rankers are based on national Nielsen numbers, not coverage.

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